



National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day turns 25



Photo courtesy of Koon Mail newspaper



See pages 10 and 11



SNAICC in running for governance award

SNAICC is among eight of Australia's top Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations named as finalists in the prestigious Indigenous Governance Awards (IGAs) for 2012.

Created in 2005, the IGAs are held every two years by Reconciliation Australia in partnership with BHP Billiton to identify, celebrate and promote strong leadership and effective governance.

The 2012 IGAs attracted over 100 applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned organisations and projects — a record-breaking figure and more than triple the number from 2010.

The awards are divided into two categories. SNAICC is one of five finalists in Category A, "for outstanding examples of Indigenous governance in Indigenous incorporated organisations".

The eight finalists were selected by an independent judging panel chaired by Professor Mick Dodson, who said the standard of applications had been high.

"Indigenous governance is really improving and our finalists represent the best of what is happening in Indigenous communities," Professor Dodson said.

"They are true success stories, achieving clear results in what are largely very challenging environments."

SNAICC Chairperson Dawn Wallam said: "SNAICC is proud and delighted that the judging panel consider us among the top Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations on governance issues.

"SNAICC has worked hard, and continues to work hard, on improving governance procedures and protocols in the agency.

"In the past 12 months, many of our national executive members and some staff have undertaken additional governance training conducted by a legal firm.

"We would also like to acknowledge the federal Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs for including a governance component as part of its core funding to SNAICC."

Reconciliation Australia said while the 2012 finalists represented a diverse range of services, each had been developed from the ground up and were genuinely owned and driven by the communities and members they represent.

The winners will be announced at an awards ceremony at BHP Billiton in Melbourne on 12 October.



Hello everyone and welcome to the August 2012 edition of *SNAICC News*.

Since I last wrote in May, SNAICC took part in two extremely important international human rights forums.

SNAICC Deputy Chairperson Geraldine Atkinson, Emma Sydenham (Manager Policy and Research), Melissa Brickell (Manager Resources) and I attended the annual United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) in New York in May. Approximately 600 Indigenous delegates were present, representing a number of First Nations peoples around the world.

The UNPFII theme this year was based on the enduring impact of the

Doctrine of Discovery. The doctrine can be traced to a papal bull (edict) in 1452, which in effect legitimized the European colonialisation of any (then) non-Christian peoples — ignoring and invalidating the rights of Indigenous peoples to the culture, history and wealth of their societies and their connections (ownership) of their lands.

Over the last 550 years, Indigenous peoples have continued to struggle to regain what was taken. The colonisers meanwhile have continued to take ever more, while making some generally mild and rhetorical gestures to reverse these trends, not least in Australia. In 1823, the Doctrine of Discovery was written into United States law in a Supreme Court case as a way to deny land rights to Native Americans. In Australia, native title law seems, more often than not, to work against Indigenous peoples regaining access to and control of their land.

For about six hours a day for eight days, participants read statements about the impact of colonisation. The majority of speakers were Indigenous, with a few government spokespersons. While governments mostly claimed that all was

well, Indigenous persons shed light on prevailing and pervasive injustice and racism.

The report of the Eleventh Session of the UNPFII is available on the SNAICC website (see also article on page 7).

In Geneva for CRC

Following the UNPFII, Geraldine and I attended the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) hearings in Geneva. The convention is concerned with the rights and wellbeing of all children. The CRC committee reviews the progress of each country that is a signatory to the CRC about every four years; this year was Australia's turn. The atmosphere was very different to New York — a smaller gathering, it was easier to navigate.

SNAICC has been involved over the last 18 months with the NGO delegation from Australia and a number of things advocated for by SNAICC, and solidly supported by the non-Indigenous NGOs, were taken up in the report by the CRC committee to the Australian Government (see pages 8 and 9).

The trip was also a valuable learning experience: we learnt the work that happens in the preceding 24 months — when committee members visit Australia to speak to community groups — is more important than the work that is done when we get to the meetings.

National children's day

This year's Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day (NAICD) on 4 August celebrated a major milestone — it was the 25th since the day began in 1988.

Over the years, NAICD has helped to remind people and governments that children remain the most vulnerable group in society. As well as being a celebration, the day is an annual opportunity to reflect on the issues faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children that are hindering their development, wellbeing and protection. This is a cliché, but children today are adults tomorrow.

If we want a healthy, intellectually capable and compassionate society, we need to give our kids the skills to have intellectual capacity and to be compassionate. I don't want to live in a society that is neither of those things.

Frank Hytten, SNAICC CEO
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Warning: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this publication may contain images of people who may have since passed away.

BBF program changes must be based on genuine consultations

SNAICC has cautiously welcomed the Australian Government's review of the Budget Based Funding (BBF) Program, under which many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood services are funded.

SNAICC Deputy Chairperson (Early Childhood), Geraldine Atkinson, said SNAICC had long advocated for changes to the BBF program to enable better delivery of services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Ms Atkinson said SNAICC saw the review as an important opportunity to improve support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services and remove some of the factors inhibiting their capacity to deliver programs.

These issues include heavy administrative and reporting workloads, inadequate funding and a single-year funding model that creates uncertainty and prevents long-term planning.

Under-funded services

"Our services have been significantly under-funded for the past 20 years, despite a growing demand and the fact they provide holistic, affordable and flexible programs that meet the needs of parents, and the cultural and educational needs of our children at the most crucial stage of their development," Ms Atkinson said.

"We expect the evidence that emerges from a genuine consultation process will demonstrate the real need for further operational funding. BBF services should not be expected to operate for far less than other services."

However, Ms Atkinson said SNAICC was concerned the Government's discussion paper was not opening any scope for increased funding to the BBF program — a critical issue currently forcing many services to become mono-functional.

She said it was crucial the review took into account the various important roles that these services play in the community beyond childcare.



Geraldine Atkinson

"We expect the evidence that emerges from a genuine consultation process will demonstrate the real need for further operational funding. BBF services should not be expected to operate for far less than other services."

"Our services, including the Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services — or MACS — are very distinct from mainstream services. They serve all the children in the community, not just those who walk through the door.

"They are community hubs, providing a range of services including outreach to families in need of but not accessing support, and a link for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids between home, community life and school.

"The child, family, culture and community are central in the MACS model."

Ms Atkinson said SNAICC was pleased the Government recognised the importance of reviewing how the BBF program can "better be targeted to support access to ECEC (early childhood, education and care) services where market failures would otherwise exist".

"Access to affordable services is vitally important to the wellbeing and future of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities in rural and remote areas," Ms Atkinson said.

She said the success of the review would hinge on the consultation process.

"We call on the Government to ensure its consultations — with families, services and communities — are culturally appropriate, genuine and will enable meaningful discussions.

"This requires significant notice to people to participate, requires time to sit and yarn with people on the issues, and requires openness about what the solutions may be."

Simple principles

Ms Atkinson said the Australian Human Rights Commission has developed clear and simple principles for consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and called on the Government to use these principles to conduct its review.

She urged everyone to get involved in the consultation process — Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, services, peak bodies and community organisations.

"This review has potential to strengthen support for our children and enable us as services to ensure strong development and learning outcomes are achieved."



New children's centre opens in northern Melbourne



Top left and main photo: Children play at the official opening of Bubup Wilam Aboriginal Children and Family Centre. Above: Centre Director, Alister Thorpe.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families living in Melbourne's northern suburbs now have access to a magnificent new children and family centre.

Bubup Wilam for Early Learning Aboriginal Children and Family Centre, which has been operating since February 2012, was officially opened on 22 June in Thomastown.

Bubup Wilam means "children's place" in the Woi Wurrung language. The centre provides an educational and care program for babies, toddlers and preschool children up to six years of age. Sixty children from 43 Aboriginal families already attend the centre.

Wurundjeri Elder, Aunty Di Kerr, performed a Welcome to Country and smoking ceremony at the official opening.

The Chairperson of Bubup Wilam, Lisa Thorpe, told guests the quest for a family centre in Melbourne's north was driven by local Aboriginal community members and organisations in 2007.

Lisa said the working group created with the City of Whittlesea — which was funded by the Australian Government in 2009 to establish an Aboriginal child and family centre — was very strong in how it wanted to see the facility developed.

"The site had to be near public transport, shops and medical services. We did not want to be placed on the back blocks," Lisa said.

"We challenged every step of the way and had a say on every aspect of the build, even if it was not wanted. But look at the result."

She said Bubup Wilam's elected board, comprising nine Aboriginal members, had based their philosophy on Multi-functional Aboriginal Children's Services, which have operated across the country for the past 30 years.

That philosophy was to instill and strengthen "children's strong sense of Aboriginal identity and personal self-esteem as their foundation for lifelong learning, health and wellbeing".

Alister Thorpe, the centre's director, said Bubup Wilam aims to provide "a thriving Aboriginal family-based early learning centre that creates strong foundations through learning, health and wellbeing."

"The children will have a chance to explore their heritage, make new friends, and get active through art and play," Alister said.

Guests at the official opening included Harry Jenkins, the Federal Member for Scullin, and local Elders.

Staff set up activities for children and families on the day, including farm animals, face painting, a science corner, bark painting and ochre painting. Entertainment was provided by local community artists Amos Roach (teaching traditional dances) and renowned musicians Kutcha Edwards and Dave Arden.

Bubup Wilam number five of 38 new centres

Bubup Wilam is one of five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and family centres to open so far across Australia under a program funded by the federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), and state-territory governments.

The other four centres are located at Canberra, Halls Creek (WA), Mareeba (Qld) and Bridgewater (Tasmania).

In all, 38 centres will be established by 2014 under the DEEWR program — 23 centres in regional and remote areas and 15 in urban locations.

SNAICC has recently produced a resource to support information sharing on the set-up and objectives of the centres.

The booklet also aims to increase awareness of the support they require to provide quality and accessible services to Indigenous children and families.

For a copy of the resource, contact SNAICC or go to www.snaicc.org.au

Queensland holds inquiry into state's child protection system

An independent Commission of Inquiry established by the Queensland Government has begun a review of the state's child protection system.

Premier Campbell Newman said the inquiry, set up on 1 July, will examine the current response to children and families in the child protection system, including service standards and court and tribunal processes.

"Improving the safety of Queensland's children is a priority and the Government will do whatever it takes to ensure they are safe," Mr Newman said.

The inquiry is reviewing the progress of recommendations made in the 1999 *Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions* and the 2004 Crime and Misconduct Commission of Inquiry, *Protecting our Children: An Inquiry into the Abuse of Children in Foster Care*.

The commission has been directed to deliver recommendations on:

- reforms to ensure that Queensland's child protection system achieves the best possible outcomes to protect children and support families
- strategies to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at all stages of the child protection system, particularly out-of-home care
- any legislative reforms required, and
- any reforms to improve the current oversight, monitoring and complaints mechanisms for the child protection system.

The Honourable Tim Carmody SC heads the inquiry as Commissioner.

Mr Carmody was a judge of the Family Court of Australia from 2003 to 2008, and Queensland Crime Commissioner from 1998 to 2002.

CEO of the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak body (QATSICPP), Natalie Lewis, said she was "optimistic" about the inquiry and its potential to reduce the



Above: CEO of QATSICPP, Natalie Lewis (right) pictured with Karen Salam (QATSICPP) and Lucas Moore (CREATE).

present over-reliance on the statutory system to deal with child protection issues, specifically those which are predominantly derived from significant social disadvantage.

"We are committed to actively participating with the inquiry to advocate for system reform that provides more support for our children and families before the statutory involvement of child protection authorities," Natalie said.

"There needs to be a greater focus on early intervention and prevention measures and improving our families' access to community based support services.

"At present, those services are largely offered only once the child has come into contact with the child protection system."

Natalie said QATSICPP had already met with Commissioner Carmody, "who was receptive to engaging QATSICPP and our member organisations in seeking solutions to the problems inherent in the system."

She said the inquiry would "provide the opportunity to showcase good practice and good outcomes" being achieved in the community-controlled child protection sector.

"It also throws the spotlight on the poor rate of compliance with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle and affords an opportunity to promote solutions and innovative strategies to improve this."

Natalie said QATSICPP would look to the experiences and learnings of NSW, as well as internationally, in the process of transitioning delegations for out-of-home care to the non-government sector to inform submissions to the inquiry.

In a far-reaching reform, in January 2012 NSW began the transfer of out-of-home care service provision to non-government service providers. The aim is to place all Indigenous children in out-of-home care with an Aboriginal agency by 2022.

A QATSICPP report in September 2011 (titled *Losing Ground*) found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children accounted for 36.7 per cent of all children in protective care in Queensland, with the figure likely to rise to 50 per cent by 2015 at the current rate of increase.

The Queensland inquiry began its first round of hearings in August in Brisbane with regional and remote hearings to follow.

Commissioner Carmody is required to provide a detailed report to the Queensland Premier by 30 April 2013.

The Commission of Inquiry website is www.childprotectioninquiry.qld.gov.au

To read the *Losing Ground* report and for more information on QATSICPP go to: www.qatsicpp.com.au

Foster and kinship carer payments rise in the NT

Payments to foster and kinship carers in the Northern Territory have increased, as part of the major reforms to the territory's child protection system.

"The commitment of Territory foster and kinship carers ensures that children in alternative care have the love, care and support that they need," NT Children and Families Minister Kon Vatskalis said when announcing the rise in July.

"The Board of Inquiry report *Growing them strong...together* recognised the importance of valuing Territory foster and kinship carers.

"This increase in carer payments is one way that the government can acknowledge the dedication of territory foster and kinship carers while providing the necessary support to ensure carers can provide the best possible care for vulnerable Territory children."

Mr Vatskalis said the new rates paid to carers will see the standard carer payment increase from between \$168 and \$248 per week to between \$210 and \$329 a week depending on the age and needs of the child.

Carers who choose to take on the responsibility of looking after a child with complex needs will receive an additional payment as will carers in remote areas and respite carers.

The department will also provide foster and kinship carers with an additional \$200 at the commencement of a placement to assist carers meet the immediate needs of the child.

Foster Care NT has welcomed the increase in payments, describing it as "highly overdue". The agency's manager, Ann Owen, said the rise brought the NT closer into line with other jurisdictions — "but we will petition for yet further increases to secure a better lifestyle for children and their carers".

"The rise means carer payments have become more realistic in terms of what it costs to raise a child in the NT," Ms Owen told *SNAICC News*.

A comprehensive review into the child protection system — co-chaired by Howard Bath and SNAICC National Executive member Muriel Bamblett — was carried out in 2010, with the NT Government accepting all the recommendations.

"The Board of Inquiry made 147 recommendations and called for wide-sweeping systemic and cultural change to child protection services," Mr Vatskalis said.

"The Northern Territory Government acted immediately...including injecting an additional \$130 million into the system and establishing a stand-alone agency — the Department of Children and Families — to oversee and implement the reforms."

The NT peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, SAFT (Stronger Aboriginal Families, Together) has pointed to an alarmingly high contact of Indigenous children with the child protection system in the territory.

Writing in *SNAICC News* in May, SAFT CEO Jodie Crawshaw observed: "Aboriginal children in the NT make up more than 80 per cent of out-of-home care placements. Two thirds of our Aboriginal children in out-of-home care are placed with non-Aboriginal carers, and only a third of them have Cultural Care Plans.

"This means the majority of them have little or no links to culture, community, country or family...

"There is a clear need to ensure that significant resources are invested to address the number of children without care plans and Cultural Care Plans. We must have bipartisan support to ensure the maintenance of family links occurs in every placement of an Aboriginal child or young person in out-of-home care for six months or longer."



Governments commit to funding homelands

SNAICC welcomes the Australian and Northern Territory governments' decision to invest \$300 million in the territory's Aboriginal homelands over the next 10 years.

Australian Government funding of \$225 million, mainly for municipal and essential services, was announced by Federal Indigenous Affairs Minister Jenny Macklin in March 2013.

The NT Government will also support employment, housing, infrastructure, schooling and transport services on the remote homelands, where small populations of Aboriginal people live on traditional country.

Under the new policy commencing on 1 July 2013, residents will work in consultation with the NT Government to decide where funds are allocated within their own homeland region.

SNAICC welcomes and supports the governments' decision to ensure the future of homeland communities — and to recognise the basic right of Aboriginal people to live on their traditional lands.

"This funding announcement is great news," SNAICC CEO Frank Hytten said. "The evidence strongly indicates the health of Aboriginal people living on homelands is better than of those living in larger communities off country."

"The health and other benefits of people living on and caring for country, raising children strong in culture and having a say in government funding and economic development provide a solid basis for stable community life."

Although accurate figures are hard to establish, of the estimated 10,000 Aboriginal people living across 500 homelands in the Northern Territory, 30 per cent are under the age of 15.

SNAICC in the Big Apple... on UN business



SNAICC participated, as part of an Australian delegation, in the Eleventh Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues held in New York from 7 to 18 May 2012.

SNAICC's primary interest in the forum was to increase the visibility of issues facing Indigenous children and youth, and seek specific recommendations to help promote and protect the human rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and youth in Australia.

SNAICC was also keen to expand its network of advocates for the rights of Indigenous children and youth around the world. In 2001, its first year of operation, the permanent forum committed to ensure Indigenous children and youth remain an ongoing focal point of its work.

While the focus has varied over the years, the annual forum has made a valuable contribution in providing a space for dialogue on critical issues impacting children, as well as providing an opportunity to work with relevant UN agencies, including UNICEF, to strengthen their efforts to promote the rights of Indigenous children.

The central theme for discussion this year was the Doctrine of Discovery — and the enduring impact of colonisation on Indigenous peoples and the right to redress for past conquests.

The doctrine can be traced to a papal bull in 1452 which endorsed the conquests by explorers of non-Christian lands.

In New York, the doctrine was explored as an international legal construct through the lens of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Participants canvassed diverse ways



Main photo: An Indigenous representative addresses delegates at the Permanent Forum in the UN General Assembly. Above left: SNAICC officer Melissa Brickell and SNAICC Deputy Chairperson Geraldine Atkinson were part of the Australian delegation at the forum.

What is the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues?

The UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), established in July 2000, is an advisory body to the Economic and Social Council. The forum has a mandate to discuss Indigenous issues related to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health and human rights.

The UNPFII is made up of 16 members acting in an individual capacity as independent experts on Indigenous issues. The sessions are open to delegates from Indigenous organisations and NGOs working on Indigenous issues.

The UNPFII holds a two-week session once a year.

in which the Doctrine of Discovery has been institutionalised in law and policy, and continues to contribute to violations of the rights of Indigenous peoples and the cycle of domination, dispossession and impoverishment.

This forum also set aside time to consider a number of other issues affecting Indigenous peoples, including violence against women and girls, the rights of Indigenous peoples to food and food sovereignty, and implementation of the Declaration.

The Australian Indigenous Peoples Organisation (IPO) network coordinated efforts of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander delegation, with Australian delegates making more than 20 statements to the Permanent Forum on issues across the agenda items.

SNAICC took the lead on a statement on children and youth, with two recommendations included in the final report.

One focused on encouragement of state ratification of the Third Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which provides a complaints mechanism for violations of the rights of children.

The second concerned an invitation to the Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to attend the Permanent Forum annually to engage in dialogue on how the Committee can strengthen its protection and promotion of Indigenous children's rights.

For more information on SNAICC's involvement with the permanent forum, go to www.snaicc.asn.au

UN report highlights Australia's failures on children's rights



The Committee on the Rights of the Child reviewed Australia's implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Geneva, Switzerland, on 4 and 5 June 2012.

SNAICC was present in Geneva for the review, having been a part of an NGO collective engaged with this Committee over the past couple of years to prepare for this hearing.

Positive discussions took place at the hearing between the committee and members of the Australian Government, and more informally with NGOs. SNAICC highlighted to both the government and the UN committee persistent human rights issues impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and the need for change.

The UN committee's report released in June 2012 provided comprehensive recommendations to the Australian Government on a number of serious human rights issues requiring redress.

They highlight in particular Australia's failure to take on board many of its prior concerns, and the gap in institutional protection of children's rights in Australia, including in particular for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

There remains, for example, no national child rights act or national plan of action. The committee expressed some dismay and surprise at the disparity in the enjoyment of human rights between most children in Australia and some particular disadvantaged groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Given the wealth of Australia, the committee could not see how this was necessary or even possible!

In particular, the committee highlighted the continued serious and widespread discrimination against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in accessing health, education and housing services.



The committee also expressed deep concern about overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the out-of-home care and criminal justice systems, inadequate standards of living, higher suicide deaths, homelessness, high levels of family violence and continued difficulties in birth registration, among other issues.

Committee's recommendations

In its recommendations to the Australian Government, the UN committee focused significantly on a gap in participation and decision-making by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for issues impacting their children as well as in Aboriginal representation in children's rights monitoring mechanisms.

To remedy this, it suggested the Australian Government:

- (a) appoint a Deputy Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's issues at the national and/or state-territory levels
- (b) establish and resource an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Steering Group to inform the development, planning, implementation and review of each "Closing the Gap" target in the specific context of child development, well-being and protection, and

- (c) ensure the effective and meaningful participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons in the policy formulation, decision-making and implementation processes of programs affecting them.

The committee provided its recommendations on issues across the spectrum of human rights, including health, education, disability, leisure, protection and identity. Most specific to areas within SNAICC's mandate, we highlight the following issues.

Children in out-of-home care

The committee drew attention to the high number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being placed into care separated from their homes and communities. It challenged the government to redress the inadequacies occurring in the current out-of-home care system. These included:

- an absence of national data documenting the criteria and decisions leading to child placement
- inappropriate placements, including placing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children outside their communities
- inadequate screening, training, support and assessment of carers, and
- a shortage of care options.

Australian Government needs to do more

The Committee on the Rights of the Child was very clear that Australia's human rights obligations require far more from the Australian Government. At the heart of what the committee felt was required included:

- meaningful participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in decisions impacting their children
- clear positions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership at both state and national level empowered to make decisions on policies and programs designed for children
- funding, staff and technical expertise to support community based programs, and
- long-term national strategies that respond to the causes of disadvantage and build on evidence of what works.

The committee expressed frustration at a number of points with Australia's failure to implement the Committee's prior recommendations, repeating calls for action.

This included a call for government measures to fully implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle and intensify its cooperation with Indigenous communities and leaders to find suitable solutions for Indigenous children in need of alternative care within Indigenous families.

This has been a message constantly repeated by SNAICC over the years. SNAICC strongly agrees with the committee in highlighting the need to work together to develop solutions that respond to local needs — and trusts the government will take on board these strong messages.

The committee felt that more could be done to improve the situation of children in alternative care placements. It referred to clear action to improve the quality of service provision, as well as access to health care and education for children in care.

In looking at longer term solutions, the committee emphasised the need for prioritisation in early intervention approaches, to provide support to families in situations of heightened vulnerability and prevent or mitigate abuse and neglect of children.

A national review of best practices in policy and programs for positive reunification of children with their families was raised as an important step. On this issue, the committee noted the disturbing consequences of children with imprisoned parents, often placed in ad-hoc and insecure alternative care that is not culturally appropriate and with low rates of family reunification.

Stronger Futures legislation

The committee called for a different approach to the punitive nature of the Northern Territory Emergency Response Act (2007), which has been continued by the Stronger Futures bills — since passed by Federal Parliament in June 2012.

It specifically mentioned the student enrolment and attendance measure which allows for punitive reductions to welfare payments for parents whose children don't attend school. It called for measures that are proportionate and that do not discriminate in form or in practice.

Culture

The committee urged the government to review its progress in the implementation of the recommendations of the 1997 *Bringing them home* report to ensure full respect for the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to their identity, name, culture, language and family relationships.

Homelessness

A review of efforts to address homelessness of children and young people was suggested by the committee, which should inform specific strategies for children, including specifically Aboriginal children, and children in regional and remote communities.

Education

The committee called on the Australian Government to protect and promote bilingual models of education, both at national and state level. It suggested that coordination and monitoring of state and territory governments should

be provided within the "Closing the Gap" initiative to ensure that individual Aboriginal education strategies are based on previous policy successes and undertaken with a long-term approach of collaboration.

Health

This was a major issue of concern to the committee. It urged the government to undertake all necessary measures to ensure that all children enjoy the same access to quality health services, with special attention to Indigenous children and children living in remote areas.

The committee recognised that the root causes of health problems in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities need to be addressed to achieve change in health outcomes. It called for action to change the socio-economic disadvantages communities experience.

Once again, the committee focused on measures that would support parents to care for their own children and the expansion of community-based programs, recognising that parents and communities are best placed to respond to issues. Government's role is to ensure the professional support and resources to enable this to happen.

Where to now?

The review is one step in a long-term ongoing process of holding the Australian Government accountable for the legal obligations that it has to respect, protect and fulfill the human rights of all children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

SNAICC is keen to start discussions with the Australian community on how we can progress the UN committee recommendations to see improved protection of rights for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

SNAICC has prepared a resource on children's rights for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services — including early childhood, youth, family support and health.

The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Rights Report Card* focuses on the committee's recommendations and proposes some ideas for how services can take up the child rights framework.

The report card is available at www.snaicc.org.au; for more information contact emma.sydenham@snaicc.org.au

National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day

Below: children from Bubup Wilam children's centre at the national NAICD launch in Melbourne. The launch featured didgeridoo playing by Yorta Yorta man Troy Kuhl (bottom pic) and traditional dancing by the Kinneman Dancing Spirits Troupe. Main photo: the troupe's youngest member, Waru Roach.



2012

Celebrating
25 YEARS
OF NAICD
1988-2012



The 25th anniversary of National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day (NAICD) on 4 August was marked by many and varied celebrations throughout Australia and SNAICC's national launch in Melbourne.

NAICD has been held since 1988 to honour and celebrate the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children within family and community; and to raise awareness of the issues that impact on their lives.

Local events across the country included a family day at the Aborigines Advancement League in Melbourne, organised by the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency and a similar event at Parramatta Park in Sydney held by the NSW peak body AbSec.

In Darwin, the NT peak body SAF,T (Stronger Aboriginal Families, Together) organised, with a number of agencies, a family day at Jingili Water Gardens which included a sausage sizzle, basket weaving, jumping castles and free health checks.

In Perth, the Department for Child Protection held an art competition open to all children in care in WA; while at Mt Druitt in NSW, the Yenu Allowah Aboriginal Child and Family Centre held a photo exhibition highlighting the importance of culture and community in raising strong, proud children.

The national launch of NAICD was held at the recently-opened Bubup Wilam Aboriginal Children and Family Early Learning centre at Thomastown.

SNAICC Chairperson Dawn Wallam said the 25-year milestone was an apt time to reflect on progress in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Ms Wallam said while there had been some improvements, our children and young people remained the most disadvantaged Australians.

She said international criticism of Australia's efforts to protect the rights of children should be a rallying call for governments to act urgently and decisively.



A karate demonstration was part of the SAF,T family day activities at Jingili Water Gardens in Darwin.



AbSec CEO Bill Pritchard with Sharon Brown (carer, left), and Maree Walk (Chief Executive, Dept of Family and Community Services) at AbSec's family fun day at Parramatta Park. The Raising Them Strong Resources for Aboriginal Kinship Carers was launched on the day.



Above: Nardi Simpson with Dulwich Hill Primary School singers at AbSec's family day at Parramatta, which included face painting (below left) among the many activities. AbSec photos on these pages courtesy of Tjarani Barton-Vaofanua.



In Townsville, Nudgee College's first XV rugby team played in jerseys specially designed for NAICD. Photo courtesy of National Indigenous Times newspaper.

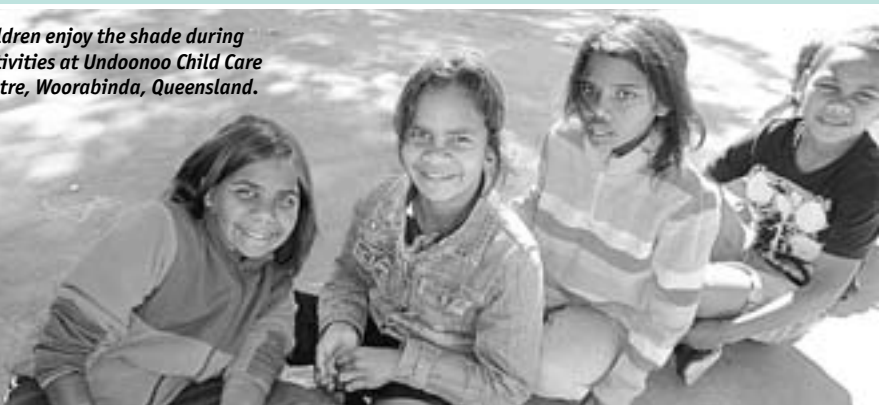


Left: (from left to right) Mrs HR Pump and Stuff (Melissa Yost), Life Without Barriers staff member Selina Holtze, Chantal the Fairy (Chantal Munro) and SAF,T's Amanda Markwell at Jingili Water Gardens.

Below: Fruit was on the menu in Brisbane at an event organised by the Queensland Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Human Services Coalition.



Children enjoy the shade during festivities at Undoonoo Child Care Centre, Woorabinda, Queensland.



Recent SNAICC consultations with diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood services around Australia highlight the various and rich ways these services foster children's sense of cultural identity through their everyday practice.

The setting is an early childhood centre somewhere in Australia. Outside the centre fly the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags, and the playground area shows recent evidence of a campfire where kangaroo tails were cooked and stories told.

Murals around the walls display contemporary Aboriginal art, painted by a local artist and depicting colourful scenes from the local area. A sculptured sand pit brings together two totems from the two local Aboriginal groups, the platypus and the turtle.

Inside the centre, photos on the wall proudly display the community: Elders, aunts and uncles, children with their brothers, sisters, cousins and parents. These photos help children to establish their identity within their family and community.

Intricate family trees or webs display each child's background and family connections — helping them to understand who their mob is and where they come from. Paintings reflect red, black and yellow, green, blue and white colours.

Books in local languages and traditional musical instruments such as the didgeridoo, clapsticks and warups sit on shelves and tables. Scattered about are culturally representative puzzles, games and toys such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dolls, that help to create a strong learning environment that reflects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities.

In the centre of the room a group of young children are gathered around a community Elder. She is telling them



Culture at the

the Dreamtime story of Mugadan and Jungaa — the lizard and the octopus. To make the story come alive she has brought with her a collection of shells, an octopus, and some picture cards. She uses words from the local Aboriginal language, and the children join in, showing off their language skills.

In another room children are exploring a map of Australia. An educator points to a map of Australia and asks “who lives up here? The Kokatha? And what bush tucker are they eating now?” Children guess that they could be eating gulda (sleepy lizards) or wulga (bush tomatoes).

The conversation moves on to memories of a recent bush trip the children went on where they collected bark for painting, built a wiltja (bush shelter) and pretended to hunt gulda...

Celebrating culture every day

While this service is fictional, it is a composite of real examples described to SNAICC during consultations on how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood services are incorporating culture on a daily and ongoing basis.

At these services culture is not something celebrated on only specific events during the year such as NAIDOC Week or National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day (although there is a special focus on these).

.....
“There's a whole board of Elders from over generations. There are pictures of Risdon Cove, Oyster Cove, children that used to come here, or political rallies done by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre that got us here. So when people walk in here they all feel welcome, they all feel connected...it's speaking to the whole community.”

**Alison Overeem
 Director, Aboriginal
 Children's Centre
 Risdon Cove, Tasmania**

.....
 Instead, these services understand that culture is inherent in all that they do and — critically — that by doing this they are growing up resilient and culturally strong children. As one educator put it, kids who “know who they are and where they're going”.

Supporting children to connect with culture also has significant benefits for their families. Through family separation and disadvantage many parents and families haven't had the opportunity as children to learn about and experience their own culture, and so passing this on to their kids can be challenging.



centre of care

Staff at some early childhood centres are finding that by teaching children about their culture and traditional languages, they are playing an invaluable role in reconnecting their families to culture when children take their new knowledge home to share, and when families participate in the centre.

Two critical factors

Two factors were identified as critical to providing a strong, culturally-focused service — Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community or parent board.

An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community or parent board helps to provide strong oversight, support and accountability, and to ensure that the direction and practice of the centre remains culturally relevant, appropriate and committed to fostering children's culture and identity.

Board members are usually Elders, community members, current or former staff and family. Boards often have at least one member who was involved in originally establishing the service, and who can provide a unique link to the past and the original service philosophy agreed upon by the community.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators were also identified as vital for services to deliver culturally rich programs. Such staff ensure that culture

“Our learning experiences have to be culturally centred, and I think that’s why our kids struggle at school, because it becomes a secondary thing or an optional extra. Whereas here it’s our daily experience.”

**Louise Cave
Director, Birrelee MACS
Tamworth, NSW**

is captured into the everyday programs and centre environment, and that the service practices are culturally relevant and appropriate.

They also bring critical knowledge of and respect for the different ways of culture, and can often also share cultural knowledge with the children, for example traditional painting, or knowledge of bush tucker, traditional languages and the local environment.

As the Director of a service in remote Queensland describes, because staff are community members, cultural identity is just “a part of who we are (and) it’s just everyday practice for us.”

The new national curriculum for early childhood, the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), states that: “Culture is central to a child’s individuality, identity and sense of belonging and success in lifelong learning”.

“Our service is about Aboriginal kids with Aboriginal kids and Aboriginal staff. I think that is one of the biggest assets and contributors to our success in this. It’s community...it’s not contrived...So I think we take for granted that community connection, and how powerful that cultural connection is when it comes to learning, self-esteem, identity and belonging.”

**Louise Cave
Director, Birrelee MACS**

Through their focus on connecting children to culture and building their identity, self-esteem and resilience, our services are clearly leading the way in this vital area.

SNAICC research

The full report coming out of these consultations — *Learning from Good Practice: Implementing the Early Years Learning Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children* — will be available on the SNAICC website soon.

This report explores how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood services implement the EYLF principles, practices and outcomes — including through their focus on culture — to support children and families. Particularly strong practices were drawn out around how services promote children’s identity and wellbeing.

As part of the research SNAICC has also produced a series of 12 good practice fact sheets. These are designed to give educators ideas for promoting, exploring and celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures while implementing the outcomes, principles and practices from the Early Years Learning Framework.

The fact sheets are not intended to provide a detailed ‘how to’ guide to implement the EYLF, but instead to prompt conversations and ideas on possible approaches.

They will be also be available on the website and in hard copy shortly.

A day in the life of TACCA



The Tasmanian Aboriginal Child Care Association (TACCA) is a licensed child care centre for 30 children operating in Launceston, Tasmania.

It provides an age- and stage-appropriate program based on observation and responsiveness to children in a safe environment, focusing on the individual strengths of children and placing a strong emphasis on Tasmanian Aboriginal culture.

TACCA implements the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), an Australian Government measure to ensure delivery of nationally consistent and quality early childhood education across sectors and jurisdictions.

Educator in charge, Bonnie Gibbons, says that the staff feel the EYLF is a positive framework that “really celebrates what children are.”

Bonnie believes the approach instills confidence in staff members, as they must think about whether the framework fits their principles, in effect, strengthening the existing structure while also driving potential improvement and expansion.

TACCA invites local Aboriginal community members to teach children traditional stories, artwork, games and history. Activities are often designed to challenge children to take on investigative roles.

Teaching children *palawa kani*, the Tasmanian Aboriginal language, enhances identity and communication skills. Healthy eating, parenting advice, and intentional teaching strategies are actively fostered.

Staff implement the EYLF principle of ongoing learning and reflective practice, which means constantly evaluating teaching techniques and deeply thinking about which activities to promote and how.

Observations are noted about children’s activities that inform future planning. Families are encouraged to contribute ideas and input for the program, share photos to display on the Centre wall, and attend the weekly Playgroup. Every child’s culture is celebrated, as there is a fundamental respect for diversity.

TACCA utilises a holistic approach to children’s development. Bonnie describes the system of family grouping, where children between six months and five years are placed together, and the older children care for and teach the younger children, so children without siblings benefit from interaction.

The strengths-based approach aims to treasure each child independently; instead of focusing on what they cannot do, they promote their abilities and interests.

“Having a really clear idea of where you want your program to go and what learning you want to happen, you can see the change in kids on the floor,” says Bonnie.

Director of TACCA (and SNAICC National Executive member) Lisa Coulson says: “The EYLF has supported early childhood educators to take families on their children’s learning journey, through sharing the development of the child-focused learning program.



The photos on this page show the breadth of activities at TACCA: from gathering kelp (main photo) and acorns to make traditional artefacts such as bags, necklaces and collages (bottom photo), to challenging outdoor activities (top photo) and exploring the individual abilities of children (middle photos).

“Parents and carers are learning to recognise the learning styles of their children which is supporting the children’s learning, not only in the centre but in the home and the community.”

Harmony the key in music and life



The latest in a series of books based on famous songs connected with Indigenous Australia has been published. *Blackfella Whitefella* by Neil Murray was launched in Bunjilaka, the Aboriginal Cultural Centre at Melbourne Museum in July.

The books are a creative way of teaching young readers important lessons in history and the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Children from around Australia contributed artwork to illustrate the lyrics.

Students from both Thornbury and Carlton North Primary schools were present at the *Blackfella Whitefella* launch, at which legendary singer-songwriter Archie Roach spoke of the coming together of all people. Children from both schools contributed artworks for the book.

The first title in the Iconic Song Series — *From Little Things Big Things Grow* — was inspired by an idea from One Day Hill Publisher, Bernadette Walters, and artist Peter Hudson in 2006. Paul Kelly and Kev Carmody agreed to donate their lyrics. All profits would be donated to the NT community of Kalkarindji to develop a place where artists could meet and paint.

The funds were raised and in 2008, One Day Hill engaged Affirm Press as a partner in the project to assist with the publication. Affirm Press was instrumental in providing inspiration

for the children's art to be part of the *From Little Things* book.

In September 2010, three more titles in the Iconic Song Series were launched at Federation Square during Melbourne Writers Festival — *My Island Home* by Neil Murray, *Solid Rock* by Shane Howard and *Took the Children Away* by Archie Roach. The books were illustrated by local schoolchildren and artist Peter Hudson.

My Island Home is a vibrant collaboration of artwork and lyrics. Neil Murray was a founding member of the Warampi Band in the eighties. Over three albums and twenty years of performing, the band helped make contemporary Indigenous music heard in mainstream. A percentage of the funds raised from book sales are directed to the communities of Papunya.

Shane Howard wrote *Solid Rock* after a moving experience at an inma (a large celebratory gathering) at Uluru. The children's book retells the story of these famous lyrics for a new generation. A percentage of the profits from book sales go towards youth initiatives in communities around Uluru.

Took the Children Away by Archie Roach is a moving indictment of the treatment of Indigenous children from the 'Stolen Generations'. The song, with the artwork of his late wife and musical collaborator Ruby Hunter, has created a children's book that tells the truth about the Stolen Generations. All profits from book

Above: Singer-songwriter Neil Murray pictured with journalist and author Martin Flanagan and music legend Archie Roach at the launch of *Blackfella Whitefella* in Melbourne.



sales are donated to Ruby's Foundation.

Archie Roach, a philosopher and storyteller in the tradition of his ancestors, relays and retells real life stories through song. Archie has also played an important role in the reconciliation process — making him an obvious choice to launch *Blackfella Whitefella*.

One Day Hill has also partnered with Ian Thorpe's Fountain for Youth. The foundation aims to help all Australian children read and enjoy their own stories. To date, the foundation has raised over \$100,000 through book sales.

The iconic song books are available through SNAICC.



5th SNAICC National Conference

For Our Children: Living and Learning Together

4 - 6 June 2013, Cairns

Planning is well under way for the Fifth SNAICC National Conference, to be held at the Cairns Convention Centre from 4 to 6 June next year.

The conference will provide a unique opportunity for us to gather and make renewed commitments to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Titled *For Our Children: Living and Learning Together*, the conference's key objectives are:

Share and Celebrate Stories

To celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, strengths and successes in child and family services. To share our stories and ideas about

what works and how we address our challenges.

Inspire Action

To inspire and enable leaders, services and others to act in a way that strengthens Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agency, self-determination, and connection to culture. To ensure the rights of our children and families are respected and fulfilled.

Listen, Learn and Grow

To listen, learn and grow our knowledge of Elders, families and communities, to strengthen our connection to culture. To inspire, foster and develop leadership and collective responses.



Lynelle Flinders



Tommy Pau



Terry Platt

Call for Abstracts

The Call for Abstracts is now open and we are presently seeking presentation from interested communities, organisations and individuals.

Presentations can include: short papers; interactive sessions such as workshops, discussion circles, stories or case studies; poster displays; and multimedia, including digital stories.

The conference themes are:

- child protection and out-of-home care
- early childhood
- young people
- family
- other, including culture, remote work, healing, rights, roles and responsibilities

Deadline for submissions is **30 September 2012**.

For full guidelines and how to submit an abstract visit www.snaicc.org.au or contact the Conference Secretariat, Sharyn Low on (02) 4572 3079 or email: sharyn@sharynlow.com.au



Conference logo

Our 2013 conference logo design is a collaboration by three Diploma students at Cairns TAFE who are already established artists in their own right — Lynelle Flinders, Tommy Pau and Terry Platt. The artwork represents “keeping the home fires burning and handing stories down through the generations”.

Lynelle Flinders

Lynelle is a descendant of the Dharrba Waara Clan of the Starkey River region near Hope Vale. She lives in Cairns with her family, and sees herself as a contemporary Indigenous artist. A lot of her work is about nature and her faith.

Tommy Pau

Tommy is an Indigenous person who likes to work in sculpture, carving, print, painting, installation art, digital multimedia — “anything that grabs my interest”.

A resident of Cairns, much of Tommy's influence and inspiration comes from the people, stories, places, skills of and connections to his Islander, Aboriginal, Papua New Guinea, Pacific and Asian heritage.

Terry Platt, Kuuku Ya'u/Lama Lama

Terry is one of the original artists from the Lockhart River Art Gang who has achieved interstate recognition for his diverse range of work. Terry is an Aboriginal man from the Lama Lama group. His father's traditional country is Lockhart River and his mother's traditional country is Coen.

Terry is a storyteller who creates images about his traditional country, his people, lifestyles and experiences as an Aboriginal man.

SNAICC thanks them for creating this design and looks forward to rolling out the conference logo across all the conference publications and seeing more of their work in the future.



SNAICC's new resource on healing

SNAICC is publishing a new resource looking at promising practices in the area of healing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Healing programs in Australia are at a new frontier. Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's National Apology in 2008 and the establishment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation helped put healing at the forefront of the national conversation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Healing in Practice documents programs that enhance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families capacity for healing, to assist services that are looking to establish a new healing service or program, or strengthen an existing one.

Individuals and organisations interested in enhancing the healing of children and families are encouraged to use this resource creatively to achieve this outcome.

The resource is intended to be practical and informative. It is not, however, a catalogue where programs can simply be plucked from its pages and expected to be relevant and effective in any situation or context.

The resource illustrates that effective and sustainable programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families always draw upon the local

communities' strengths and requires community leadership, community ownership and community knowledge.

Among the programs showcased are Berry Street's Take Two Program in Victoria, the Healthy Family Circle Program in New South Wales and the Yorgum Aboriginal Family Counseling Service in Western Australia.

At the core of each of these programs is a focus on strengthening children's connections to Aboriginal people and culture. Programs profiled in the resource have been detailed under four primary principles listed by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation as essential for successful healing.

The four key principles are:

- address the causes
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ownership
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldview, and
- a strength-based approach

By highlighting how these core principles work within each program, SNAICC hopes to provide communities with inspiration, ideas and examples that they can adapt to their particular needs and circumstances. This work also builds up the practice-based evidence of what works and why, enabling our community-organisations to refine their practice and service.

"Healing gives us back to ourselves. Not to hide or fight anymore. But to sit still, calm our minds, listen to the universe and allow our spirits to dance on the wind. It lets us enjoy the sunshine and be bathed by the golden glow of the moon as we drift into our dreamtime. Healing ultimately gives us back to our country. To stand once again in our rightful place, eternal and generational."

— Helen Milroy

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Healing Foundation
Development Team**

Healing in Practice also discusses the meaning of healing, the need for healing, and documents some practices of programs already experiences successes in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the necessary elements required for promising healing practices. SNAICC hopes services will be able to gain new ideas and information to assist the development of this work.

For more information contact:
nick.butera@snaicc.org.au

New parenting guides for Aboriginal families in WA

WA Community Services Minister Robyn McSweeney has launched parenting resources for Western Australian Aboriginal families titled *Guiding our children, our way*.

The tip sheets for new Aboriginal parents is the first in a series of parenting guides to be rolled out later this year.

"Parenting is a tough job, your children don't come with a manual and it is important to get as much information and advice as possible to help with the important task of raising children," Mrs McSweeney said.

"These guides are written by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people and are intended to benefit new parents raising children through to the teenage years."

Guiding our children, our way is a set of 12 tip sheets that cover topics such as:

- raising families and respecting Aboriginal ways
- Aboriginal identity
- the importance of role models
- what makes families work well
- step families
- story-telling
- the importance of grandparents
- getting support, and
- helping children grieve.

"These sheets are just one part of a suite of resources on offer to all WA parents and families and I would encourage anyone needing support or advice in raising children to contact Parenting WA," the Minister said.

Donna Legge, Manager Program Development at the Department for Communities, said the guides were based on Parent Easy Guides from South Australia.

Donna said the guides had undergone a rigorous quality assurance process and been adapted for WA by two Aboriginal staff from the department. Professor Colleen Hayward, head of Kurungkurl Katitjin, Edith Cowan University's Centre for Indigenous Australian



"These guides are written by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people and are intended to benefit new parents raising children through to the teenage years."

Education and Research, provided further help.

The guides are available free on the Department for Communities website.

The Department for Communities also delivers the Aboriginal-specific early years Best Start programs, which support Aboriginal families in nurturing children's development during the first five years.

The Parenting WA Aboriginal Guides were launched on 4 July as part of the activities to celebrate 2012 NAIDOC Week.

Other parenting guides to be launched later this year and next year will focus on babies, children, teenager and families.

The Parenting WA Aboriginal Guides are available at www.communities.wa.gov.au under the Parenting WA section.

Parenting WA offers a free 24/7 help line on (08) 6279 1200 or 1800 654 432.



SNAICC has produced a hard-copy edition of its popular *Growing up our way: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Rearing Practices Matrix*.

The matrix was published online in late 2011, but such has been the interest from communities that SNAICC decided to go to print to make the guide more accessible.

The matrix was developed following a two-year research project by SNAICC of the literature on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child rearing practices, values and beliefs.

Growing up our way provides detailed quotes on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child rearing practices — collected from the relevant literature, through independent research and interviews with members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Detailing some of the values, beliefs and practices that help children grow up strong in self and proud in culture, this resource is for all who are interested in preserving, promoting, valuing and respecting the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child rearing practices.

One of the resource's key aims is to preserve and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child rearing practices for our communities, for our families, and for our future generations.

It also aims to increase the cultural awareness — and culturally-appropriate work practices — of those working with, and supporting, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The guide is available from SNAICC (see contact details on page 19).

Cultural competence workshops proving a hit

SNAICC, in partnership with Family & Relationship Services Australia (FRSA), is offering two-day "Working and Walking Together" Cultural Competence Workshops, which are proving a great success with service providers.

This two-day journey is both awakening and empowering for participants. With highly-skilled, sensitive and knowledgeable facilitators and a high-quality resource manual as the foundation of this training, the discussions and activities both challenge and educate participants.

The workshops are aimed at services that wish to develop culturally appropriate professional practices for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

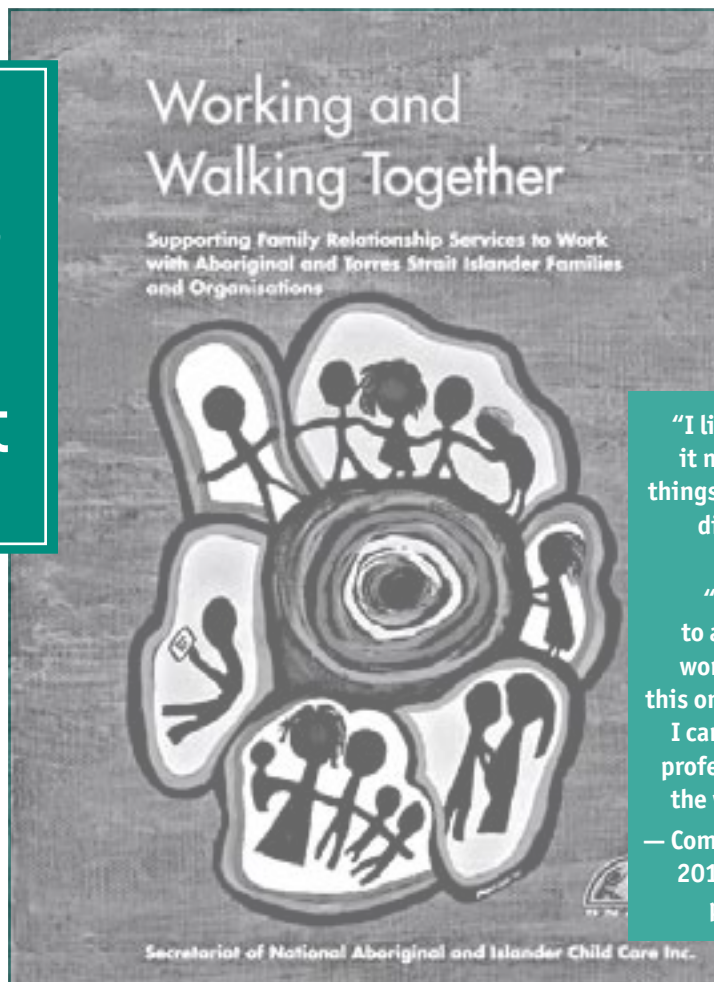
Based on SNAICC's 2010 manual *Working and Walking Together*, the workshop provides ideas, information, tools, case studies, practical tips

and encouragement to strengthen relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, communities and organisations.

The workshops are delivered by two presenters (usually one Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander and one non-Indigenous person). The presenters support participants to reflect on their own personal experience and professional practise. The workshops can be run for an organisation or

for individuals across different organisations. Workshops require a minimum of 15 and maximum of 20 participants, and can be held in any location across Australia. Fees for workshops vary depending on the location and number of participants.

For more information or to make a booking, please contact Kate at FRSA on (02) 6162 1811 or emailing kateallen@frsa.org.au



"I liked the way it made me see things completely differently — thank you."

"I would like to attend more workshops like this one, because, I can work more professionally in the workplace."

— Comments from 2012 workshop participants



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relevant organisations for current information concerning their activities.

Line art by Nina Kelabora.

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Our Children, Our Culture, Our Way Book celebrates 25 years of NAICD



Main photo: Ben Lawrie (circled) as a seven-year-old at a protest in Sydney in 1988. Top photo: Ben today, with daughter Kirra. Above: Ben's mum Lyn with Kirra and another grandchild, Amon.

Ben Lawrie was seven years old when he attended the Survival March in Sydney in 1988, one of many protests during Australia's bicentennial celebrations that year that included the inaugural National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day (NAICD).

Ben was photographed with lots of other Aboriginal children under the "Our Kids — 1998 SNAICC" banner — an iconic photo that would form the basis of the first NAICD poster.

Earlier this year, Ben's mother Lyn was one of the many people to contact SNAICC when it sent out a call for photos to feature in a coffee table book to mark the 25th anniversary of children's day.

Ben and Lyn and their family are featured in the book — titled *Our Children, Our Culture, Our Way* — which contains many wonderful images of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Lyn explained the events behind the photo — and events in her family in the 25 years that followed.

"In 1988 I attended the Survival March held in Sydney NSW, I had my children with me, we walked with all the other

thousands of other Aboriginal people from Redfern oval to the city, my son and his little mates on the day took turns holding the SNAICC banner," Lyn wrote in a letter to SNAICC.

"My son Ben Lawrie is now 31 years old...he is the little boy directly under the "C" of the word Cultural. Ben was born in June 1980, so he is about seven and half years of age (in the photo).

"Ben lives on the Central Coast NSW, (Budgewoi) and he has a daughter Kirra who is 10 years old. Kirra lives with her non-Aboriginal mother; Kirra comes to our place and Ben's place every weekend and school holidays. She is very connected to her culture and is proud of her father and Aboriginal family, she has a very strong connection to her Aboriginal cultural identity."

Lyn has two other grandchildren to daughter Rowena, 16-year-old Kiyahna and five-year-old Amon. "They both love to get painted up and dressed for dance. Amon is grounded and connected to his Aboriginal culture," Lyn wrote.

"In 1995 my son Ben and Amon's father Clayton travelled to Mornington Island where they stayed for four to five months and went through Aboriginal

ceremony Lore... the ceremony involved at least 30 boys who went through Lore, and they are now traditional owners of men business.

"Ceremony was a very proud time for me and my family, us women danced for our sons all night (traditional way — under the stars at Mornington Island).

"Kirra knows her father's story, we have pictures from the ceremony, when her father was 15 years old, because we live in a very modern urban society, I have committed to never letting my grandchildren miss out on who they are and who they belong to, I just think for Kirra and for Ben's relationship, sharing a picture of them in such a beautiful project book would consolidate for her that although she has fair skin, her father is who he is, an Aboriginal traditional man.

"As an Aboriginal mother from Queensland, the one thing I have tried to instil in my children and grandchildren is Aboriginal cultural pride. Everything else can follow, but my view is if you're strong in your identity, you can be strong in other things."

Our Children, Our Culture, Our Way is available for purchase from SNAICC (see our contact details on page 19).